

# 14 Must-Watch LGBTQ Valentine's Movies

Valentine's Day is right around the corner, so it's time to start making your plans! Whether you're spending the day with yourself, your friends, or your significant other, a romantic date night in is always a good idea. Think several bottles of wine, overflowing popcorn, and your favorite Valentine's movies of all time.



Here, we list 14 of the best romantic movies to watch on Valentine's Day, from cheesy romantic comedies to foreign language films to stirring Oscar-worthy masterpieces.

## 1. *Fire Island* (2022)

*Fire Island* is a 2022 LGBTQ rom-com written by and starring comedian Joel Kim Booster. The film follows Noah (Booster) and his gay friends (played by Bowen Yang, Matt Rogers, Tomàs Matos, and Torian Miller) as they go on a sexy, week-long romp on the popular gay vacation spot Fire Island.

A modern take on Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, *Fire Island* is so much more than your run-of-the-mill rom-com. The film explores classism in the LGBTQ community, as well as issues like anti-Asian discrimination, fatphobia, and heteronormativity. With its honest and nuanced portrayal of gay friendships and modern dating culture, *Fire Island* is a great flick no matter who you're watching with.

## 2. *Carol* (2015)

*Carol* tells the love story of a young department store clerk and aspiring photographer Therese (Rooney Mara) and Carol (Cate Blanchett), an older, married woman going through a complicated divorce. Set in the 1950s, *Carol* portrays the difficulties of not only being a lesbian but also a woman at a time when the social possibilities of women were extremely limited.

With breathtaking cinematography (inspired by the works of photographers like Vivian Maier and Esther Bubley), a heart-rending score, and powerful performances by Mara and Blanchett, it is no surprise that *Carol* is one of the most beloved lesbian movies of all time. Some sapphics also claim it as the ultimate lesbian Christmas movie.

Like the revolutionary novel it is based on, Patricia Highsmith's *The Price of Salt*, *Carol* was commended for giving its lesbian characters a relatively happy, or at least open-ended, ending. It's a breath of fresh air amid the dozens of lesbian films and TV shows that rob their characters of a chance to be alive and together, let alone happy, in the end. For more on this, see the "Bury Your Gays" trope, as seen in *Killing Eve*, *Orange is the New Black*, and *The 100*.

### **3. *Portrait Of A Lady On Fire* (2019)**

*Portrait of a Lady on Fire* was the first film directed by a woman to win the Queer Palm at the Cannes Film Festival in 2019. Directed by Céline Sciamma (*Tomboy*, *Water Lilies*, *Girlhood*), *Portrait of a Lady on Fire* is another period film that portrays a beautiful yet forbidden love between two women.

The film is a slow burn, filled with subtle hints, stolen glances, and lots and lots of yearning as painter Marianne (Noémie Merlant) falls in love with her subject, the aristocratic Héloïse (Adèle Haenel), who is set to be married off against her wishes.

If you're a fan of lesbian period films, you can also check out *Ammonite* starring Kate Winslet and Saoirse Ronan, and *Wild Nights with Emily*, a playful take on poet Emily Dickinson's life starring Molly Shannon.

### **4. *Call Me By Your Name* (2017)**

Based on Andre Aciman's novel of the same name, *Call Me By Your Name* is a coming-of-gay romantic movie about Elio Perlman (Timothée Chalamet), a 17-year-old French-Italian Jewish boy living with his parents in Northern Italy, and 24-year-old Jewish American graduate student Oliver (Armie Hammer), who stays with the Perlman family over the summer. Equal parts raw, sensual, intimate, and intellectual, *Call Me By Your Name* is a deeply relatable portrayal of the fiery and oftentimes painful experience of falling in love for the first time.

Screenwriter James Ivory won the Academy Award for Best Adapted Screenplay for his work on *Call Me By Your Name*. The film was also nominated for a Best Picture Award while then-22-year-old Chalamet became the third-youngest nominee for Best Actor.

### **5. *The Half Of It* (2020)**

Written and directed by *Saving Face* director Alice Wu, *The Half of It* is a queer, modern-day retelling of *Cyrano de Bergerac*. This coming-of-age film centers on smart loner Ellie Chu (Leah Lewis), a high school student who helps her father make ends meet by doing homework for her classmates. Her life gets turned upside down when the doltish but lovable jock Paul (Daniel Diemer) employs her help to write letters to his (and later on Ellie's) crush, Aster Flores (Alexxis Lemire).

But (spoiler warning) *The Half of It* isn't your typical romantic comedy – the main character doesn't get the girl in the end. At least, not yet. Instead, *The Half of It* emphasizes self-love and self-acceptance, all while weaving in themes like familial expectations and obligations, the Asian-American immigrant experience, small-town life, and unlikely friendships all into one smartly written and laugh-out-loud funny film.

### **6. *Brokeback Mountain* (2005)**

If bawling your eyes out to one of the greatest love stories ever told is your idea of a romantic date night, then there is no better flick than *Brokeback Mountain*. Based on a short story by Annie Proulx, *Brokeback Mountain* is about the years-long secret relationship between two closeted cowboys in rural Wyoming.

Directed by Ang Lee, the visionary behind films like *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, and *Life of Pi*, and featuring an all-star cast (Jake Gyllenhaal, Heath Ledger, Anne Hathaway, and Michelle Williams), *Brokeback Mountain* is one of the most commercially and critically successful LGBTQ romantic dramas of all time.

In fact, it bagged eight Academy Award nominations and won three, including Best Director for Lee. It was also nominated for nine British Academy Film Awards, winning Best Film, Best Adapted Screenplay, Best Direction, and Best Supporting Actor for Gyllenhaal.

### **7. *A Secret Love* (2020)**

*A Secret Love* is a documentary that delves into the real-life romance of Pat Henschel and Terry Donahue, former players in the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League. Yes, the very league that would inspire the 1992 sports drama *A League of Their Own* and the 2022 TV series.

In the documentary, Pat and Terry get candid about the struggle to keep their relationship secret from their families for nearly 70 years, the chosen family they built and kept over the years, and the inevitability of aging. Unlike other Valentine's movies that end just as the main characters fall in love and/or get married, *A Secret Love* focuses on what will be the closing chapter to a decades-spanning love story.

### **8. *Love, Simon* (2018)**

If you're looking for a wholesome, feel-good flick that'll leave you feeling warm and fuzzy inside, *Love, Simon* might just do the trick. This gay teen rom-com follows closeted high schooler Simon Spier (Nick Robinson) as he wrestles with his sexuality and attempts to uncover the identity of "Blue", a student at their high school who posts an online confessional about being gay. Through email correspondences, the titular character (under the pseudonym "Jacques") and Blue open up to each other and slowly fall in love.

*Love, Simon* has been praised for its sensitivity in dealing with topics like being outed and coming out on your own terms. It's a sweet, funny, and heartwarming film that is perfect for first dates.

### **9. *Happy Together* (1997)**

Wong Kar-wai's Hong Kong romantic drama *Happy Together* is a raw and searing visual feast revolving around a gay couple who travel to and get stuck in Argentina after Hong Kong's handover to China in 1997. However, don't be fooled by the title – *Happy Together* is not a warm and happy film. Its main characters Po-Wing (Leslie Cheung) and Yiu-Fai (Tony Leung) find themselves trapped in a constant cycle of love, jealousy, and destruction as they get together and come apart over and over again.

Still, despite its overall melancholy mood, *Happy Together* is an exquisite film and perhaps the best example of Wong Kar-wai's storytelling and visual genius. To this day, it is regarded as one of, if not the best foreign language film centered on gay life, love, and heartbreak.

### **10. *The Way He Looks* (2014)**

*The Way He Looks* is a sweet coming-of-age film about Leonardo (Ghilherme Lobo), a blind teenager living in Brazil, and Gabriel (Fábio Audi), a new student at Leonardo's school. After being paired for a project, the two become closer and slowly realize that they're falling for each other.

If you're interested in a sweet, lighthearted, and relatively wholesome gay best friends-to-lovers story a la *Heartstopper*, then *The Way He Looks* might be just what you're looking for. Come for the butterflies-inducing chemistry between the two young actors, and stay for the sensitive portrayal of disability, teen friendships, and young love.

### 11. *Weekend* (2011)

If *Weekend* had to be described with only one word, it would be “intimate”. The British film follows Russell (Tom Cullen), a reserved lifeguard who struggles to be openly gay in public, and Glen (Chris New), a relationship-averse art student, as they meet, fall in love, and part ways all throughout a single weekend.

*Weekend* is often compared to *Before Sunrise*, particularly for the short duration in which the two characters are actually together and the deep and intimate conversations they have as they get to know one another. But unlike *Before Sunrise*, *Weekend* delves into some of the complexities, joys, difficulties, pressures, and anxieties of being gay in today’s world.

### 12. *A Fantastic Woman* (2017)

Unlike most of the films on this list, this 2017 drama is not exactly a love story. Instead of focusing on burgeoning romantic relationships, this film follows a young woman from Chile named Marina as she grieves the sudden death of her older boyfriend, Orlando. Being a trans woman, Marina is faced with challenge after challenge as Orlando is laid to rest, from the police suspecting her of being a sex worker to Orlando’s family harassing her and denying her the chance to say goodbye to her lover.

Simultaneously tender and powerful, this film is a rare and all-too-important window into the everyday struggles of trans people.

### 13. *Maurice* (1987)

Directed by *Call Me By Your Name* screenwriter James Ivory and based on the E.M. Forster novel of the same name, *Maurice* stars James Wilby as the titular character and a young and dashing Hugh Grant as Clive, Maurice’s love interest as a young student in Cambridge.

Set in the early 1900s, *Maurice* explores societal expectations, class, and forbidden love at a time when homosexuality was considered a criminal offense. The film itself, released in 1987, has been commended by critics for its positive portrayal of gay love at a time when the AIDS crisis ravaged queer communities around the world.

### 14. *Imagine Me & You* (2005)

Starring Piper Perabo as newlywed Rachel and Lena Headey as Luce, the florist at Rachel’s wedding, *Imagine Me & You* is a fluffy, feel-good movie that hits all the marks of your typical romantic comedy, from the time-stopping love-at-first-sight moment to Rachel’s mad dash to the airport to make one last public declaration of love to Luce.

While neither the story nor the cinematography is anything unique, there is a palpable chemistry between Perabo and Headey that is undeniable. Coupled with charming and hilarious supporting characters (including Matthew Goode, Celia Imrie, and Anthony Head), this film is one you’ll want to rewatch on particularly gloomy days.

## The Bottom Line

Whether you’re looking for a gut-wrenching drama to sob over or a light-hearted rom-com to watch with your childhood friends, there is sure to be something on this list for you. So, curl up with your loved ones (or your pet!), grab some popcorn, and press play!

If you are looking for more romantic ideas, check out our [Romance](#) section.

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